



Coalition for a Sustainable Delta

November 5, 2010

VIA E-MAIL

Phil Isenberg
Chair, Delta Stewardship Council
650 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Comments on California Water Supply and Use

Dear Chairman Isenberg:

At the September 23-24, 2010 meeting of the Delta Stewardship Council (DSC), the Council discussed a presentation by Joe Grindstaff titled "California's Water Supplies and Uses." The Council indicated an intent to post this presentation on the DSC website to serve as a reference for the public. The Council also invited interested members of the public to comment on the presentation. The Coalition for a Sustainable Delta (Coalition) is writing to provide comments. We refer to the version provided in the meeting materials, since we have not found a copy posted on the DSC website. In addition, the Coalition hopes that these comments will prove useful as DSC staff prepare the white paper on water resources for the November meeting.

**Slide 11 (Environmental, Agricultural, and Urban Water Use Compared):
Information from water years 2008 and 2009 would provide useful information on
changes to ag and urban water supply under recent court decisions.**

The information on Slide 11 of the California's Water Supply and Uses presentation is taken from the 2009 Water Plan Update, which focuses on the 2005 water year. The environmental uses, represented by the blue column in the graphs, include wild and scenic river requirements and Delta Outflow requirements. Because DWR has not gathered, or at least published, the relevant information beyond 2005, the 2009 Water Plan—and hence slide 11—does not reflect more recent levels of environmental, agricultural and urban uses. 2005 was a fairly wet year, so even under Water Rights Decision 1641, which regulates water project operations, there was a good deal of required Delta outflow. However comparing a year like 2005 to 2008 or 2009 would provide useful and necessary information on the impacts of the recent federal court decisions issued by Judge Wanger regarding the salmon and delta smelt biological opinions. For 2008 and 2009, the green and gray bars, representing agricultural and urban use, would be much lower.

Slide 13 (Urban/agricultural water use increases and available water for

environmental use decreases in drier years): More recent information is needed to reflect the impacts of recent court decisions on agricultural and urban water use in drier years.

The information in slide 13 is helpful to demonstrate the difference in ag, urban and environmental uses in wet, average and dry years, but the slide does not show the impacts of the recent court decisions issued by Judge Wanger regarding the salmon and delta smelt biological opinions. 2007 (a dry year) and 2009 (a below average year) should be added to illustrate the drastic difference (decrease) in water received by ag and urban under Wanger and the biological opinions when compared to 1961. Even if this information has not been published, estimates should be available from DWR. At a minimum, the slide should include a footnote discussing this issue.

Slide 16 (Cumulative change in Central Valley groundwater storage (1962-2003)): Providing the total estimated groundwater storage for the Central Valley would help readers understand the order of magnitude for the chart as a whole.

Without a comprehensive figure of groundwater storage capacity it is difficult to put the figures in the chart into context.

Slide 18 (Balancing water supplies and uses from year to year is becoming more challenging): The first bullet point on Slide 18 should note that in many cases, shifting to permanent crops increases irrigation efficiency but hardens demand.

The first bullet point on Slide 18, which states that shifting to permanent crops results in “changing irrigation patterns” should more specifically describe the “changes” with respect to irrigation. In many cases, irrigation efficiency increases, but the demand hardens. This addition will provide more specific information to readers who may not be familiar with agricultural practices.

Slides 22-23 (Average annual snowmelt for Upper Feather River; Historical and projected decreasing California snowpack): This set of slides, which illustrates the decreases in snowmelt and snowpack, should also address increases in direct run-off from rain and the related issue of storage.

Slides 22-23 tell only a part of the story related to the predicted impacts associated with changing temperatures and precipitation patterns. Although there will be less snowmelt and overall water supply with increased temperatures, a shift in run-off is also predicted. Rather than precipitation in the form of snow, which melts later in the year and contributes to water supplies, there will be an increased amount of direct run-off occurring earlier in the year. The increased, earlier run-off means that additional storage is a key component to capture that supply for future use. Focusing only on the decrease in supply driven by a decrease in snowmelt doesn’t address the need for additional storage. Increased runoff, timing, and storage issues are all discussed in the 2009 California Water Plan Update prepared by DWR.

The Coalition appreciates the opportunity to comment on the foregoing issues related to water supply and use. We hope that these comments will be useful as you finalize the water resources white paper and prepare a final Water Supply and Use presentation for posting on the DSC website.

Coalition for a Sustainable Delta

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. D. Phillimore', with a stylized flourish at the end.

By: William D. Phillimore, President